

APRIL, 1943

NINEPENCE

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Vol. XXXVIII  
No. 219

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LONDON, E.C.4 (Central 1555)

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Edited by Frances Stephens

April,  
1943

Over the  
Footlights

**M**ARCH was a busy month for new productions, and many more are scheduled for the coming weeks. *Junior Miss* opened at the Saville on March 24th, too late for review this month, but preliminary reports suggest another big success for the Firth Shephard management. The eagerly awaited *Love for Love*, with John Gielgud, opens at the Phoenix on April 8th, but no dates are as yet announced for Priestley's *They Came to a City* and the big American success, *Uncle Harry*, all H. M. Tennent offerings.

Meantime *The Devil's Own*, a new play by that prolific writer of farces, Walter Ellis, in conjunction with Will Collins and Lew Grade; this by way of change a melodrama, has already opened at Manchester. Also on tour is *The Vagabond King*, prior to its London season, and *The Duchess of Dantzic* (with Fay Compton) is another revival on the way. Lupino Lane's *La-di-Da-di-Da* will soon be enlivening the Victoria Palace.

**T**HE Equity ballot revealed a 3-1 majority in favour of Sunday theatres as a wartime measure. With the profession's own view clarified it now remains for public opinion and the Government to be influenced in the right direction. Already the subject has been aired at amazing length in the correspondence columns of the daily press, and now that lively new organisation C.A.S.T. (Campaign of Actors for Sunday Theatres) is pressing on with the fight in rare style. Noel Coward is President, Patricia Burke Hon. Secretary, and Dennis Arundel, Michael Redgrave, Alec Clunes, Ivor Novello and Oriel Ross are numbered among the committee, with many leading actors and actresses, including John Gielgud, Diana Wynyard, Leslie Henson, Sybil Thorndike, Donald Wolfit, etc., etc., in strong support. We may expect matters to move quickly from now on. F.S.



STEPHEN HAGGARD

The English theatre has suffered a grievous loss by the death on active service in the Middle East of Stephen Haggard, at the early age of thirty-one.

Stephen Haggard had a great talent for the stage, and, what is rarer, a humility in approaching his art that spelt great achievement for the years to come. Born in Guatemala in 1911, the nephew of the late Rider Haggard, he was educated at Haileybury and Munich University, and was the author of a novel and a play as well as of a number of poems. His first big triumph on the London stage came in 1934 at the New, when he appeared as Latour in "The Laughing Woman." Other brilliant performances that remain in the memory are his Finch in "Whiteoaks" (Little, 1936), Constantin Treplef in "The Seagull" (New, 1936), and Marchbanks in "Candida" (Globe, 1937). What is not easily forgotten is that, not content with the gruelling training he sought with a repertory company when he was already an established actor, he elected afterwards to go to the R.A.D.A. for a year.

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P603A



# New Shows of the Month

## "What Every Woman Knows"

**T**HIS is a wholly delightful revival of one of Barrie's most appealing plays. Not having seen the original production and Hilda Trevelyan's memorable performance, I cannot draw comparisons. But for me Barbara Mullen is the ideal Maggie, and I do not expect to see a better. John Stuart, too, has a grand dour Scots way with him as John Shand, whom the canny Maggie moulded like clay. And how satisfying the performance of Dame Irene Vanbrugh as the Comtesse. Her lovely voice rings out like a girl's, it is sheer joy to listen to her.

Nicholas Hannen is good as Charles Venables, and Norman MacOwan, Caven Watson and James Woodburn are authentic Scots as Maggie's father and two brothers. Dancer Diana Gould makes an interesting debut as the doll-like Lady Sybil. F.S.

## "It's Foolish but it's Fun"

**T**HE title of a show ought to mean something. After all, one goes to this or that show in some definite frame of mind, and to Douglas Furber's Coliseum revue one would naturally take a mind prepared for an effortless absorption of the foolish and the funny. But a high proportion of this programme consists of ballet and musical numbers, with clever choreography, deadly-serious corps de ballet far removed from all forms of foolishness, polka, can-can, lovely costumes, lyrics old and new. The audience, despite Nervo and Knox's funniest efforts in "Music Hall," "Return to Yesterday" or "One Good Turn" are constantly impelled from a state of pleasant participation in nonsensical situations and amusing trivialities of talk to a sober contemplation of the idyllic, the graceful, the sentimental. However, these two principals have vitality enough to



SONIA DRESDER 20th Century.

whose memorable performance as Hedda in Walter Hudd's production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* at the Westminster has raised her to the front rank of leading ladies, and proved her to be one of the most interesting of the younger actresses.

permeate the whole: Betty Driver's robust singing and weirdly attractive mannerisms, and the real acrobatic skill of the Dormonde Brothers, are fun-alive; Danny Page, Phyllis Stanley, Guy Fielding, Daphne Peretz, Nancy Burne and Roy Jefferies make telling contributions to the folly or the fun.

E.M.H.

## "Hedda Gabler"

(Mercury Players, in association with C.E.M.A.)

**F**OR fifty years the great actresses of Europe have aspired to interpret Ibsen's Hedda: to crown brilliant careers with a sensitive presentation of that forceful, tragic, tortured being. And now in the safe hands of Sonia Dresdel, who came from the Old Vic to the Mercury Players, Hedda's re-creation again delights the critical at the Westminster Theatre. Sonia Dresdel's Hedda is stormily beautiful, tense, restrained; that is, until in sudden short outbursts, quickly and gracefully overcome by Hedda the social

**The Merry Widow**—His Majesty's, March 4th.  
(See pages 22 and 23.)

**What Every Woman Knows**—Lyric, March 10th.

**Brighton Rock**—Garriek, March 11th.  
(See pages 9-20.)

**It's Foolish but it's Fun**—Coliseum, March 12th.

**Stepping Out with Phyllis**—Whitehall, March 16th.

**Hedda Gabler**—Westminster, March 16th.

**The Well of the Saints—Beyond**—Arts, March 17th.

**Strike a New Note**—Prince of Wales, March 18th.

**Heartbreak House**—Cambridge, March 18th.



being, her frustration and disappointed ambition burst torrentially from her, and those great eyes kindle, that expressive body springs to life. Walter Hudd as the faintly ludicrous, upright, but inadequate husband, Jörgen Tesman, and Elwyn Brook-Jones as the Judge who is so blandly ruthless (and, at the end, so pathetically incredulous of his real impotence) are finely cast for these exacting rôles. Julian Randall plays the dissolute scholar, Eilert Lövborg, Helen Burns his helplessly-infatuated aide and inspiration to literary achievement. Irene Arnold is Aunt Juliana Tesman. This is a polished and masterly performance, a feast for the fastidious and observant theatre-goer. E.M.H.

### "Stepping Out with Phyllis"

ANOTHER bright non-stop show at the Whitehall marks the return of Phyllis Dixey, the tantalising, attractive "It" girl, whose modulated caressing voice is as ensnaring as her lovely form. In the programme also are Jack Tracy and Rosalie Edwards giving comedy interludes, acrobatics from Cliff and Moreny and D. Harris as female impersonator and mimic, not to mention the Andreieva Ballet and the charming young ladies who always bring colour to this kind of show. F.S.

### "The Well of the Saints"— "Beyond"

THE current "Arts" programme comprises three plays—J. M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints*, Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* (from *Man and Superman*) and Peter Ustinov's *Beyond*. The first and last have this in common—that certain aspects of old age and defeat by life itself, be they comic or tragic, form the theme. From the Saints' Well comes holy water to cure the blindness of old Martin and Mary Doull (W. G. Fay and Maureen Moore). Sight brings discontent with the marriage partner (heretofore deemed comely enough); with the Eastern Irish world of young villagers, thoughtless and priest-thralled; old joys of hearing and imagining and conjecturing are gone; the world is bleak and censorious. Return to blindness is for man and wife a return to comparative peace of mind—to all appearances a rare state in those parts, surely. Michael Golden, Barbara Waring, Dorothy Primrose, Tony Quinn and Charles Smith, with Morley College and C.S.D.A. Students, complete the authentic Irish personnel.

Ustinov's *Beyond* will do little to enhance his reputation. It has not the *House of Regrets* soundness nor its well-worked out completeness. It is a one-act play of ragged

ends, unlikely event and none too convincing (though brilliant and powerfully observed) dialogue. Denys Blakelock (shades of the pallid choreographer) makes a fine old superfluous poet: Marcus Barron and Tarver Penna are the other derelict inmates of an unnecessarily grim old men's home.

The Shaw play was unfortunately not in the programme on this night, but it is hoped to review it later. E.M.H.

### "Strike a New Note"

IF you are a day over thirty you feel a positive back number at this new George Black revue, which is, overflowing with the high spirits of youth. In a breathless succession of tap dancing, swing and hot numbers a host of talented youngsters as yet unknown in the West End make a vain attempt to work off their superfluous energy. At the end of the show they are all as fresh as daisies, beaming, confident youngsters looking for fame. It was almost physically exhausting to watch them.

There was, however, some consolation in the fact that the big hit of the evening was made by a not-so-terribly-young. Sid Field is a comedian we shall see a lot more of in the West End. He is a discovery for London, and his golfing interlude with Jerry Osmonde was the real high spot of the programme. Then again, London will hardly look upon Zoë Gail as a "discovery," and her song "I'm Going to Get Lit Up" brought down the house.

All the same it was an excellent idea to give youth a chance, especially with Robert Nesbitt to produce in his usual masterly way.

Of the "discoveries" the little coloratura singer Leni Lynn is full of promise, and we shall watch with interest the future careers of Triss Henderson, Theresa Langfield, Marion Lincoln, Tommy Linden, Derek Roy and others. F.S.

### "Heartbreak House"

FAULTLESS is the word one must inevitably apply to this revival of Shaw's most Shavian dramatic effort. Faultless in the acting and setting and interpretation, it ranks with *A Month in the Country* as a revival no self-respecting theatregoer will miss.

Robert Donat is surprisingly robust as Captain Shotover, eccentric overlord of Heartbreak House, whose personality is the motif of the play. It is one of his best performances to date. Edith Evans and Isabel Jeans are every bit his daughters in the grand Shaw manner, and another plea-

(Continued on page 8)

Save Your Waste Paper — and help the War Effort



# A Month in the Country

Scenes from Emlyn Williams's adaptation of Turghenev's famous comedy, which has scored a brilliant success at the St. James's Theatre. *A Month in the Country* will be the subject of a full supplement in the May Theatre World.



(Top right): A scene from Act I in the drawing room of Yslaev's country house near Moscow, showing L-R: Annie Esmond as Anna, David Baxter as Kolya, Tom Gill as Beliaev, John Ruddock as Shaaf, Winifred Hindle as Lizaveta, Valerie Taylor as Natalia and Michael Redgrave as Rakitin. (Right): The Doctor (Ronald Squire) pays his respects to Natalia. (Below): A tense moment between the young tutor, Beliaev, and Natalia's ward, Vera (Isolde Denham). (Below right): Natalia beseeches Rakitin not to forsake her.







Tunbridge-Sedgwick.

### CHILLI BOUCHIER

as Mamie Scott the Little Bit of Fluff in the uproarious revival of Walter Ellis's classic farce *A Little Bit of Fluff* at the Ambassadors Theatre.



20th Century.

### BETTY PERCHERON

whose light hearted performance as Christine adds so much to the charm of *Old Chelsea*, the Richard Tauber musical at the Princes Theatre.



20th Century

### ELLEN POLLOCK

is having a great success as Freda Tunbridge, one of the bewildered wives in Walter Ellis's witty farce *Sleeping Out* at the Piccadilly Theatre.

## New Shows of the Month

*Continued from page 6)*

sant surprise was to discover in Deborah Kerr, who appears as Ellie Dunn, a young actress whose considerable stature as a film star is not lost upon the stage.

In support J. H. Roberts as Mazzini, Vernon Kelso as Hector Hushabye, George Merritt as Boss Mangan, Francis Lister as Randall Utterwood, Amy Veness as Nurse Guinness and Philip Godfrey as The Burglar are all excellent.

F.S.



RICHARD BIRD

Harlip

whose reputation as producer has been greatly enhanced by his masterly direction of *Brighton Rock*, which is reviewed fully in pictures in the following pages.

## Anglo-Polish Ballet

NEW SEASON AT THE WINTER GARDEN

**T**HE first night of this season suffered from a long-drawn-out and scrappy programme, and the company has lost immeasurably in vitality and cohesion by the absence of those two brilliant dancers and dynamic personalities, Halama and Konarski, now enchanting audiences at the London Hippodrome. Konarski's new ballet, *Pan Twardowski*, the Polish *Faust*, was not therefore seen at its best advantage. It lacks dramatic form and Konarski's inventiveness with Polish dance material, so varied and charming in *Cracow Wedding*, appears here rather to have run dry. The ballet stands or falls by the Hell scene which has moments of superb choreographic originality; on tour, with Halama as the She Devil, it had startling rhythmic force, but both scene and part are now weakened by cutting. *Sylphides* was not helped by a dancer's strange attempt to syncopate the Waltz, and Leo Kersley should threaten resignation if his wig is not instantly returned to the front cover of "*Bally Hoo*." *Spectre de la Rose* should never be attempted. The pivot of this company is now Helena Wolska, a classical dancer of brilliance and incredible fairy lightness; like Pavlova, she floats on air. This jewel deserves a finer setting.

The corps de ballet in *Swan Lake* is, however, greatly improved; the arms are consistently good and the four little swans excellently danced. Maria Sanina, also improved classically, achieves a striking *tour de force* in what remains of the *She-Devil* in *Pan Twardowski*. Toni Repetski's Devil is equally macabre, but he needs much more gaiety in *Cracow Wedding*.

A.W.



(Right):

Ida: I like the lights in a Bar  
shining on the brass.

HERMIONE BADDELEY as Ida  
Arnold, warm-hearted frequenter  
of saloon bars turned sleuth, who  
tracks down the race-gang with  
relentless fervour.

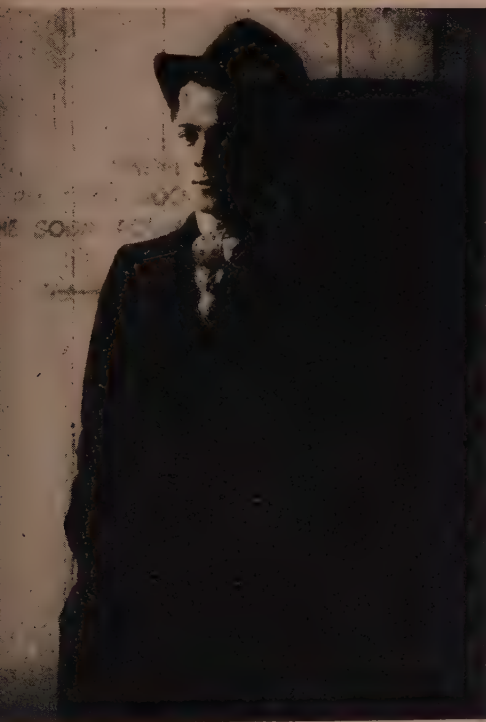
#### SCENES AND FRONT COVER

STUDY BY JOHN VICKERS.

(Below):

Pinkie: When people do one  
murder, I've read they sometimes  
have to do another, to tidy up.

RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH as  
Pinkie, the ruthless, twisted,  
embittered seventeen year old  
gang leader, whose efforts to  
keep his gang together lead to  
his ultimate downfall.



## “Brighton Rock”

**T**HERE is no lack of thrills and excitement in this clever dramatisation of Graham Greene's sensational novel, which, however, for all its grimness of theme and faithful portrayal of gangsterdom at its most sordid, boasts many a laugh and some amusing sidelights on life in Brighton on a pre-war Bank Holiday. Frank Harvey, the young author of *Saloon Bar* fame, is responsible for the adaptation, Richard Bird produces and Messrs. Linnit and Dunfee, who are presenting the play at the Garrick, are to be congratulated on their enterprise in giving us yet another new English play, at a time when revivals and American productions are the rule rather than the exception.

Of the acting it can be said that no play was ever better cast. Hermione Baddeley and Richard Attenborough score big personal triumphs, but down to the smallest part the company have created a stark realism all too rare on the modern stage.





*Spicer: Kolley Kibber in Brighton to-morrow.*

The opening scene, in Pinkie's sordid room at Brighton. Members of his gang discuss a former associate, Fred Hale, who as "Kolley Kibber," is to be in Brighton the next day stunting for a newspaper. Hale was responsible for the recent death, at the hands of Colleoni's rival gang, of Pinkie's gang leader, Kyte.

(L-R: Beckett Bould as Spicer, Bill Hartnell as Dallow and Norman Pierce as Cubitt.)



*Spicer: Why don't you lay off that bitch?*

A few words between Dallow and Spicer on the subject of Judy, sluttish wife of the blind landlord, Frank, who runs a cleaning business downstairs. Pinkie, now self-appointed leader of the gang, has just returned from Kyte's funeral.

(Richard Attenborough as Pinkie, Virginia Winter as Judy.)

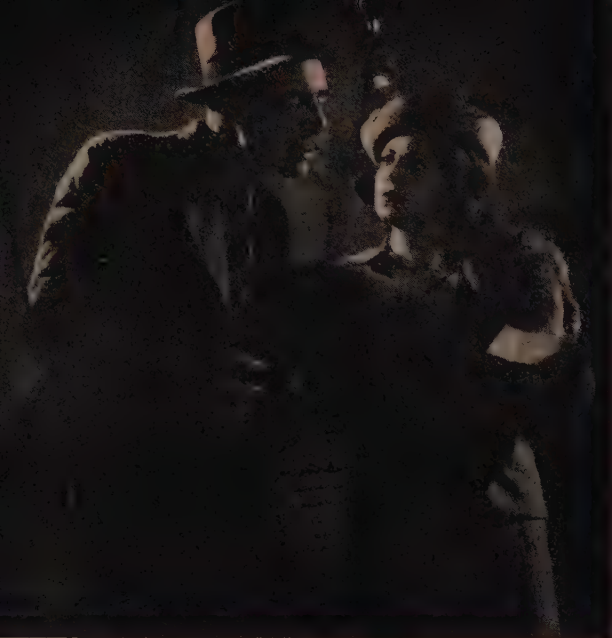


*Dallow: We don't want to carve you . . . not here.*

Pinkie, who had regarded Kyte almost as a father, has his revenge on the terrified Fred Hale. The gang have tracked him down to the pier, seizing the first opportunity to take him off.

(Charles Lamb as Fred Hale.)





*Ida:* Why, that's one of Kolley Kibber's cards.

Ida Arnold, on holiday at Brighton, mystified by the sudden disappearance of her chance acquaintance, Fred Hale, whom she had left on the pier only a few minutes ago, is further puzzled to find one of Kibber's cards in a fisherman's basket. Later she learns of Fred Hale's death.

(Tom Leybourne as the fisherman, Hermione Baddeley as Ida Arnold.)

*Detective:* You're not enough for your job, Pinkie Brown.

The gang have a sit from a police detective (Rupert Idons), who gives timely warning.



*Pinkie:* That's just to show who's protecting you.

The unfortunate Pinkie, Brewer, who is forced to pay for "protection" from both gangs, comes to see Pinkie, who, having fixed a razor under his thumb nail, slashes the poor man's face with the astounding callousness.

(Sam Lysons as Pinkie, Brewer.)







*Rose:* I'll never let you do  
never, never.

To cover their tracks after the death of "Kolley Kiber," Pinkie has sent Spicer out to plant some of Kiber's cards around the town. He foolishly leaves one at Snow's Restaurant, a place Pinkie, afraid he may have been seen, goes along to square up the waitress, Rose Wilson, a pathetic waif of a girl of sixteen, who falls hopelessly in love with the unscrupulous Pinkie.

(Dulcie Gray as Rose.)



*Pinkie:* You never seen vitriol?  
That's vitriol. It burns.

The sadistic boy introduces the innocent girl to one of the tricks of his trade.



*Colleoni:* You can't damage my business like mine, my young friend.

Pinkie, determined to get rid of Spicer, who is losing his nerve after the death of Fred Hale, calls on Colleoni, the rival gang leader, at the Cosmopolitan Hotel and pretending Spicer has designs on Colleoni's gang, fixes it for Spicer to be "up" on the racecourse at a given signal. For all his boasting, Pinkie is obviously impressed by the wealth and position of his rival.

(Lyn Evans as Colleoni.)





*Phil:* You're a terrible woman, Ida.

Ida, enjoying a drink at the Cosmopolitan with an old flame, is nevertheless now hot on the scent of Fred Hale's murderers, and determined to get at the bottom of the mystery. She sends a reluctant Phil to Snow's Restaurant to see what can be discovered about Kolley Kibber's recent visit.

(Ernest Borrow as Phil Corkery.)



*Ida:* You were the lucky one who found the card?

Ida, following later, finds Rose, who has sworn loyalty to Pinkie, very uncommunicative about Kibber's visit. Rose knows now that it wasn't Kibber who left the card, but even the friendly Ida cannot worm the truth out of her.

Ida, watching Pinkie, back from the race-course fracas, go into the restaurant to see Rose.





*Pinkie:* They got more than they gave.

Rose gives Pinkie's cuts some first aid in the restaurant.

(Below):

*Ida:* That was a real tip a mistake.

The horse tipped by Hale on the day of his timely end is a winner  
Ida gets a nice wind





*Pinkie: If I wanted to get married, what'd I do?*

*Prewitt: Wait a few years.*

Pinkie, who is afraid Rose may one day be forced to give evidence against him, decides to marry her as the only solution. He calls in Prewitt, the dissolute old lawyer who does business for the gang, to make the necessary arrangements, as both are under age. (Harcourt Williams as Prewitt.)



*Spicer: Pinkie, I thought Colleoni's mob had got you.*

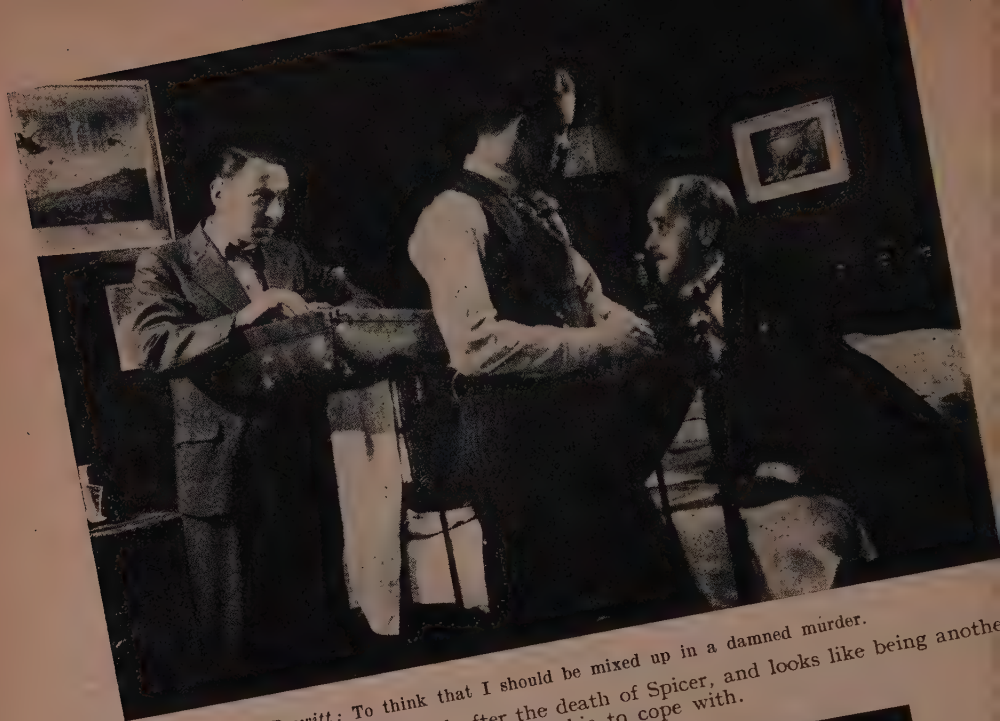
The dramatic moment when Spicer, terribly cut about and unaware of Pinkie's treachery, staggers back from the racecourse. Pinkie, with a cold brutality, leads him from the room and pushes him over the banisters to his death. The others are horrified, tough-minded though they are, and Cubitt turns on the murderer.



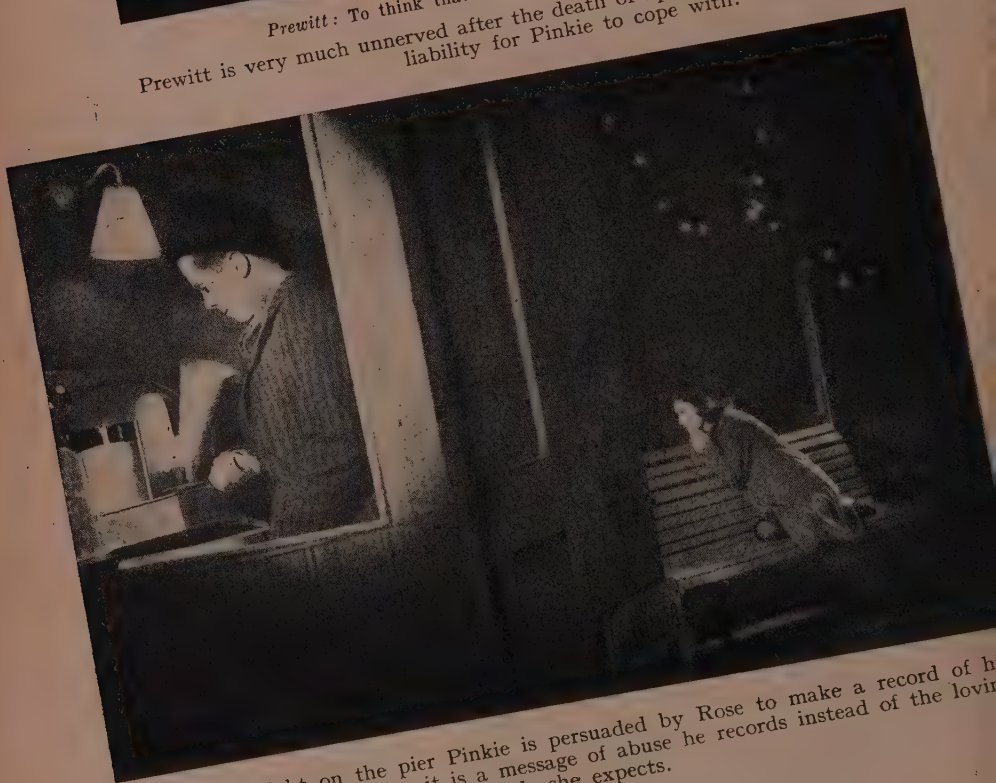
*(Left):*

*Cubitt: You're so yellow you'd kill your best friend to save your own skin.*





Prewitt: To think that I should be mixed up in a damned murder.  
 Prewitt is very much unnerved after the death of Spicer, and looks like being another liability for Pinkie to cope with.

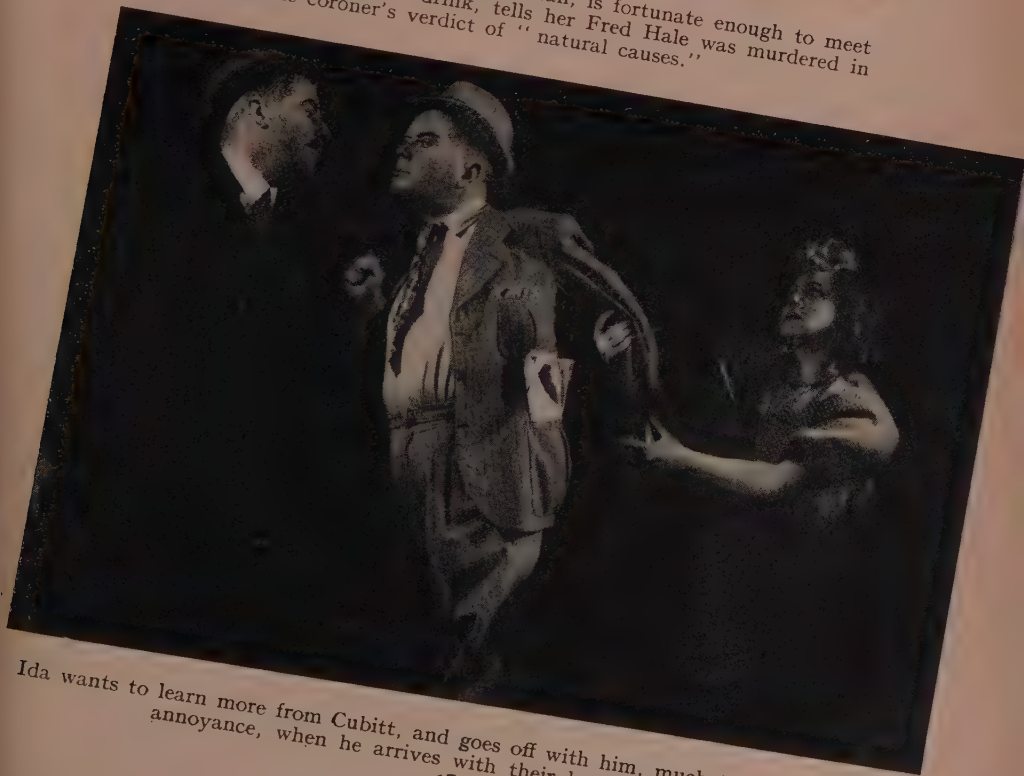


Later that night on the pier Pinkie is persuaded by Rose to make a record of his voice, but unknown to her it is a message of abuse he records instead of the loving words she expects.





*Cubitt:* You don't want to get mixed up in a murder.  
 Ida, enjoying her windfall in style at the Cosmopolitan, is fortunate enough to meet with Cubitt, who, a little the worse for drink, tells her Fred Hale was murdered in spite of the coroner's verdict of "natural causes."



Ida wants to learn more from Cubitt, and goes off with him, much to Phil Corkery's annoyance, when he arrives with their bags at the hotel.



*Judy:* Well, ducks, you're one of us now.

Rose and Pinkie are married, in spite of Ida's efforts to save the unfortunate girl. Next morning Judy looks in to pay her respects.



*Judy:* It's your Mum, dear.

Ida determined at all costs to save Rose from her folly, gets into Pinkie's room by pretending to be the girl's mother.





*Ida*: How soon will it be before he's scared of you again?

The dramatic scene when Ida confronts Pinkie and fearlessly tells Rose the truth about his character and his motive in marrying her. But Rose's pathetic loyalty is unshaken and Ida retires defeated.

(Below): Later, fearing the worst, Ida comes back and learning that Pinkie has gone out with Rose, persuades Dallow to get a cab and follow them.





*Rose: I love you, Pinkie. Wherever you go, I'll go, too.*

Pinkie's diabolical plan is unfolded. He has cunningly persuaded Rose to join a suicide pact with him, and asks her to write a note that will make her death look like suicide. Telling her he will shoot himself afterwards he hands over the pistol and leaves her.

Dallow and Ida rush on the pier only just in time to save the girl.



*Pinkie: Come on then, Dallow, you bloody squealer.*

Pinkie, cornered, brings out his bottle of vitriol, but in the struggle the liquid pours out over his own face. With a scream of agony he jumps over the pier. His vicious, perverted life is at an end.



*Ida: He was no good to you, dear.*

The closing moments of the play. Ida tries to comfort the hysterical Rose, who clings desperately to the tell-tale record of Pinkie's voice; the record that will fortunately, we feel sure, shatter for ever the love she bore him.



## Young Talent and the Future

by Audrey Williamson

THE problem facing the director of ballet in war-time is not merely how to keep up a reasonable standard of performance in the face of untold difficulties; there is the problem of the future, the discovery and development of the young dancer. A gap, even of a few years, between the generations of trained executants might be fatal to the future of ballet. Ninette de Valois, aware of the danger, has set out with characteristic foresight to combat it, and the steady growth of young talent in the Sadler's Wells Company, with the promise of at least one future ballerina, is her reward and justification.

She has, of course, been criticised, most of all for allowing the 15-year-old Beryl Grey to dance the complete 4-act *Lac des Cygnes*; but Miss de Valois is used to criticism and she has a quite diabolical habit of proving right in the long run. She is, I think, right about this child. Miss de Valois has herself in the past opposed the premature forcing of the "baby ballerina," but she realises that the present times are abnormal, and the deterioration in standards applies not only to the dancer but to the audience. It is, largely, a new audience, and dancers of pure classical style are so rare that if this audience is to be educated it must be given the chance to see and recognise this style when it occurs. Beryl Grey undoubtedly possesses it; perfectly musical, she has a breathtaking extension of "line" in arabesque and a technique which for fluency and ease would be remarkable in a much older dancer. Already she tackles the difficult third act of *Lac* with brilliance, her circular series of spins from the second position being beautifully spaced. Her feet are almost always neatly placed, and in *Sylphides* she is poetical and moving. Obviously she is as yet immature as an actress; in *Comus* and *Dante Sonata* she is merely a child lost in the dark, though this very innocence can be touching. Her personality has natural warmth and sweetness and in *Rendezvous* she is fresh and gay as a Spring breeze. Her chief trouble is her height, which if it increases will make it difficult to find partners for her. She is, in fact, already suffering from uncertain partnering and it is a pity she cannot sometimes have the advantage of Helpmann's sureness and impeccable timing at this important stage of her development. When they danced together in *Sylphides* at the Open Air Theatre last summer they



Tunbridge-Sedgwick.

### MOIRA SHEARER

seemed lyrically perfectly matched and she has never appeared to lovelier advantage.

The other white hope of this company is Moira Shearer, a lovely redhead with a grave beauty of arabesque that gives to the *Sylphides* Waltz a perfection that this most haunting of Fokine's dances rarely attains in performance. Her porcelain Shepherdes in *Gods Go A-Begging* is charming, her *Patineurs* skater has a white frosted radiance, and her increase of virtuosity is apparent in *The Birds*, though her Nightingale is at present a little over-serious. She has a tendency to bend at the elbow in the second and fourth position of the arms, but her hands, like those of Margaret Dale, are lovely and she has rare musicality and grace.

Margaret Dale's Bluebird and Sugar Plum Fairy have beautiful "line" and are perfect "ballerina in miniature," Helpmann gravely handling this Sugar Plum as if it were a precious china doll that might come to pieces in 'is' and. She has wit, piquancy and glittering precision, but she has not yet quite the speed for *Rendezvous*, the part overtries her and one got the impression, as with John Field's *Patineurs*, that she went into it under-rehearsed. This practice is fair neither to artist nor audience; one realises the necessity of bringing out young talent, but there are dangers and some recent performances of the *Lac Pas de Trois* (evening performances too) have been hardly above school-student standard. The best *Pas de Trois*, that of John Field, Julia Farron and Jean Bedells, was too rarely seen.

Joan Sheldon is a dancer definitely on the up-grade. She has diamond-hard points and her double spins in *Patineurs* are

(Turn to Inside Back Cover)



(Above): The wealthy Merry Widow, Sonia (Madge Elliott) arrives in Paris and is charmingly contemptuous of her admirers, whom she suspects rightly of being fortune hunters only. (Right): Sonia and Prince Danilo (Cyril Ritchard) dance the Marsovia national dance in the grounds of Sonia's house near Paris. (Below): Natalie (Nancy Evans), the "dutiful wife" of the Marsovia Ambassador, entertains her guests at the Marsovia Embassy in Paris. Further scenes from this successful revival at His Majesty's appear on the opposite page.



## Scenes from "The Merry Widow"





(Above): Nisch, messenger to the Marsovia Legation (Leo Franklyn), in a delightful interlude with Frou - Frou (Carol Raye), principal dancer at Maxim's, and one of Prince Danilo's many gay lady friends. (Left): Sonia claims to have been Vicomte Camille de Jolidon's companion in the Summer House, and the Marsovia Ambassador, Baron Popoff, is reconciled to his wife Natalie. George Graves (left) as Baron Popoff, and Charles Dornig as the Vicomte. (Below): One of the many charming dances.



Jack Hylton's revival of *The Merry Widow* with its colourfulness and verve, has proved much to the liking of the modern theatre-goer. The production owes much to the skilful use of the revolving stage, to the delightful dances and the all-round excellence of the cast. George Graves was the original Baron Popoff and time has not dimmed his wit, while Madge Elliott and Cyril Ritchard are obviously at home in the parts of Sonia and Prince Danilo. Special mention should be made, too, of Carol Raye's charming contribution in song and dance and to Leo Franklyn's outstanding performance as Nisch. Franz Lehar's lovely tunes are as fresh as ever.



(Left): His first drawing—ANNA PAVLOVA, 1931. (Re-produced by courtesy of "The Dance" Magazine, New York.)

Readers of *Theatre World* will be familiar with the brilliant work of Stanley Parker, many of whose drawings adorned the pages of this magazine in pre-war days. Only lack of space has precluded us from publishing more in the intervening years, but it is hoped to include examples of his more recent work from time to time in the future. (Below left): Stanley Parker at work.

## Parker Portfolio . . . . .



**H**ORDES of Polish refugees fleeing in terror before the Nazi invader during the opening days of the war were taken so completely by surprise that they left half-eaten meals on their kitchen tables as they stumbled blindly Eastwards with an armful of essentials hurriedly snatched from the very jaws of destruction.

I have often wondered what I should want with me, if suddenly compelled to choose the instantaneous evacuation of my home in preference to violent death. Next to a warm overcoat I feel fairly certain I should grab my portfolio of Stanley Parker drawings before pursuing a headlong flight along the highroad.

My choice is neither crazy nor facetious. The Theatre means more to me than any other phase of life. Life without it would be quite meaningless. In his drawings of the leading players of our time Stanley Parker has immortalised the full glory of our



# An Appreciation by *Eric Johns*:

contemporary stage and has chronicled it with a breath-taking beauty of line such as no eye has seen since Loie Fuller's swirling scarves floated lifelessly to her feet as she bowed before her final curtain. Such records, well worthy of becoming "desert island" companions, should never be permitted to suffer destruction at the hand of the Hun or any other vandal.

A Parker drawing is so much more than a striking portrait of a famous actor or actress; it captures the soul of the artist. At the dawn of the next century a youngster may look back and ask just why Sybil Thorndike was the greatest tragedienne of her time. He need not seek an ageing playgoer for nostalgic memories of her "Saint Joan," her "Lady Macbeth," or her "Medea." By contemplating a Parker drawing he will gain far greater satisfaction. No photograph could ever hope to convey so vital and so subtle an impression of the Thorndike magic.

## The Essence of Art

Just as the grooves of a gramophone record re-create the art of Kreisler, Toscanini, or Flagstad, so the lines of a Parker drawing reveal the very essence of Lilian Braithwaite, Edith Evans, or John Gielgud. It is their art rather than their features which he draws. A photograph can catch the physical likeness, but Parker gives us infinitely more.

These drawings which caused him to be dubbed "the greatest individualist since Aubrey Beardsley," may not be the traditional speaking likeness of the sitter, yet, on the other hand, they cannot be classed as caricatures, even though he seems to regard his sitter with a caricaturist's eye. They are revelations. Executed in black and white, these things of beauty sweep aside all pose and affectation and present stage folk in the stark light of their artistic achievement with such cunning that we are also able to glean much concerning their imagination, their temperament, and their intellect.

## He Draws in the Theatre

Away from the theatre, the actress fails to fire his artistic imagination; it is the player and not the woman who inspires him. The psychological moment to draw her, he says, is after the show, as she reaches her dressing room with the applause still ringing in her ears and the silver still glistening on her eyelids. Then both actress and artist are at their best, as he darts her a searching glance over his drawing board, with quick neck movements highly reminiscent of Uday Shankar in his haunting Hindu dances. An actress poised on the crest of artistic success melts under the spell of Parker's pencil and



(Above): His first "heroic" drawing—SYBIL THORNDIKE, 1932 (by courtesy of "Table Talk," Australia), and below, his first London drawing—ELIZABETH BERGNER, 1936 (by courtesy of "The Tatler").





His latest drawing—FRANCES DAY, 1942. (Re-produced by courtesy of "The Sketch.")

he re-creates her, as a monument for posterity.

It was Pavlova who first set this young Australian's genius aflame when he was a mere lad of seventeen, and the resulting drawing won such universal approval that the leading journals of London, Paris, New York, and Berlin published it as a last tribute to the greatest of all ballerinas when she fluttered to her tragic death at The Hague in 1931.

Parker saw her dance on every night of her Australian season, making countless preliminary sketches in the auditorium before going back-stage to draw her. He believes in soaking himself thoroughly in the atmosphere of his sitters before allowing his pencil to finally trace those lines which will assure them of immortality; he made fifty-six auditorium sketches of Sybil Thorndike and saw her "Medea" sixteen times before he tackled the drawing which was hailed even by Gilbert Murray himself as the ideal con-

ception of the Witch of Colchis.

In 1936, quite unheralded and unsung, this young man with the Leslie Banks profile and the Oskar Denes smile arrived in London, accompanied by his elegantly gowned mother who still remains his ideal and constant playgoing companion.

His eye lighted upon Elizabeth Bergner, and in a flash he detected perfect copy. Bergner is about as elusive as Garbo, but after storming her for ten days with letters, phone calls, and telegrams, she eventually consented to sit for him during the filming of "Dreaming Lips"—with Barrie as a silent onlooker. Parker's sensational portrait took London by storm within a fortnight of his unobtrusive arrival. Every actress was anxious to sit for him; but keeping his head, he only chose those whose work had struck some spark in him, so that George Bernard Shaw was able to say, "They are not drawings, but dramatic criticisms."

### Unconventional Beauty

Conventional chocolate box beauty leaves him quite cold, since he sees beauty in the way in which a face differs from the norm, rather than in the manner in which it conforms to it—hence the secret of his arresting studies of such exotic artists as Gitta Alpar, Gertrude Niesen, and Beatrix Lehmann.

Parker is too young to have given us Bernhardt, Nijinsky, or Caruso, but he has distilled the quintessence of such artists as Cecile Sorel, Sacha Guitry, Delysia, Dietrich, the Lunts, Marie Tempest, Noel Coward, Emyln Williams, John Gielgud, and Ivor Novello into imperishable phials.

Most of his time is now devoted to the great political figures who are carving our destinies in this war-torn world, perpetuating them in pen as well as pencil, for, like Max Beerbohm, to whom he has so often been compared, his writing is as brilliant as his drawing. Lloyd George, Maisky, Beveridge have all sat for him, and his studio in Oxford is like the anteroom of the Hall of Fame.

Fortunately Parker still finds time to slip into his favourite dressing rooms to capture stars in their most recent moods. His imaginative portrait of Frances Day, entitled "Daydreams," goes to assure us that despite the war, beauty still flourishes and the ever-swelling portfolio remains an ever-increasing joy.

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# Whispers from the Wings

BY  
LOOKER ON

A FEW days ago the Editor received via *Soviet War News* a cable addressed to *Theatre World*. It came from Moscow, and provides an interesting little cameo of the theatre in Leningrad during the worst days of the siege. We in London remember the early days of the raids and understand in part, but only in part, because here there was never the problem of siege to contend with. Here is the cable almost exactly as received from V. Potapov:—

"Winter twilight falls on Leningrad's ice-covered streets and squares. Silence reigns in heroic city. Only ominous rumble in distance and flashes lighting up the horizon remind one of never ceasing artillery bombardment.

"People are milling around a beautiful yellow building with white columns and four bronze horses driven by Apollo. The majority of them haven't yet finished their day's work which often lasts beyond midnight; and haven't concluded the battle which has been going on for months, but during intervals between shifts, during short lulls between attacks, they like to come to spacious gold and velvet auditorium which has never before contained spectators as eager and as alert as these. The Musical Comedy Company is now playing in former 'Alexandrinsky,' now Pushkin, Theatre which was built by the great Rossi. Leningraders love their operetta stars, because during grimdest days they remained in the city suffering terrible privations of siege. At the time when theatres were being evacuated musical comedy actors, asked whether they wanted to leave the city, answered determinedly, 'NO' and stayed and acted in the unheated auditorium, eating hardly enough food to keep body and soul together, but the show went on despite everything. Shell smashed window and wind swept stage. Actors closed holes up with boards and worked on. They gradually increased number of plays in repertory to nine (Silva, Maritsa, Kholopka, etc.), and started rehearsing new operettas. Recently new musical comedy 'Wide Spreads the Sea' by Vsevolod Vishnevsky Alexander Kron Vsevolod Azarev was produced. Show was made ready with war-time speed. Book was written in 18 days, music in 12. Rehearsals took less than a month.

The auditorium is filled to capacity. There are many sailors in audience. Curtain rises at exactly 5 p.m. Small motor torpedo boat with the proud name of 'Eaglet' is seen on stage. It has a crew of four: Lieutenant Kedrov—old boatswain Schekotikhin—mechanic Misha Chegrygin—Gunner Zhora Bronza. The plot is simple. Four sailors thirst for action which they haven't seen for some time. They are finally given orders to land a scout on

enemy shore. The scout turns out to be a girl, Lena, from Leningrad, Vyborg district. During third scene, when Lena is cross examined by the Germans and saved by the Soviet sailors, the Alert Signal is sounded. Spectators demand that the show should be continued, and they leave with regret."

\* \* \*

**TALKING** of the theatre and the raids reminds me of a cheery hour I spent with indefatigable Winnie Sloane at the Victoria Palace during the run of *Twenty-to-One* (Miss Sloane is now again at the



WINNIE SLOANE

Victoria Palace in Lupino Lane's new show, *La-di-Da-di-Da*). Miss Sloane was excellent as the typical lady-with-a-cause who subsequently found unexpected pleasure in a surreptitious bottle of intoxicating liquor, and I wondered at the time why I hadn't seen more of her in the West End. But I soon discovered that Miss Sloane, a member of the well-known stage family—Olive Sloane is her sister—has the spirit of a real trouper and has some grand stories of touring days to tell.

In the comparative security of 1942 we laughed heartily together over her first raid experience in London. She was billed in a variety show in a theatre up in the East End. In the same programme was a snake charmer who kept her stock-in-trade in a wicker laundry basket in her dressing room. The artistes were just making up for the evening performance when the blitz broke. "Our alarm at the sound of the bombs was as nothing to the sudden horror that overwhelmed us when we remembered the contents of the basket. I can still see us unceremoniously bundling our fellow performer and her basket out of the theatre—if memory serves me she was still in her dressing gown. Anyhow a taxi was procured for her and off she went, grease paint, basket and all. As for me my one desire that evening was to get away from the narrow East End streets and their small houses. I was lucky enough to get some friends living in Victoria to put me up in their solid several-stories mansion-like abode. And would you believe it I spent the whole night hating that solid structure in case it fell on top of me!" Well, we all got used to it after, but I could heartily sympathise with Miss Sloane over that first raid feeling.

# Echoes from Broadway

NOT for many years has a play been the subject of such violent controversy as Thornton Wilder's new comedy hit, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, presented by Michael Myerberg, and currently packing the Plymouth Theatre.

Mr. Wilder's last play on Broadway was *Our Town*, brought successfully to the stage by Jed Harris, and done without scenery. Mr. Harris was privileged to take first peep at *The Skin of Our Teeth*, but passed up the opportunity—as did some forty others—to participate in a production of it. Mr. Myerberg, despite discouragement and disappointment on all sides, would not let his belief in this script be shaken, and with his faith backed up by Mr. and Mrs. Fredric March (Florence Eldridge) and Tallulah Bankhead, *The Skin of Our Teeth* came to town and nobody in the theatrical world has been the same since. Some of the critics could not check their enthusiasm for it, others could not condemn it enough; while the reaction of the paying public has been just as bewildering—some playgoers indignantly walking out in the middle and demanding their money back at the box office, others sticking by their acclaim of it almost to the point of having that best friend who didn't like it, put some place out of his misery.

Apparently there is no half way measure about your feelings for it: if you like it, you can't bear to see a single gesture of disapproval, and vice versa. When such a strong difference of opinion exists, it usually results in the theatregoer going himself and forming his own viewpoint, for no intelligent playgoer wants to miss not seeing something he might regret for the rest of his playgoing years, so *The Skin of Our Teeth* is getting by on a much larger margin of profit than the title suggests.

## Tallulah Bankhead Triumph

As an added box office appeal there is Fredric March to play Mr. Antrobus; Florence Eldridge to do Mrs. Antrobus, and Tallulah Bankhead to do Sabina, their maid, and in the middle act an Atlantic City bathing beauty, and then a camp follower. The tantalising Tallulah has never been seen over here in such a marvellous comedy part, and regardless of what you think of Mr. Wilder's opus, you cannot escape the brilliance of Miss Bankhead's comedy antics and her astute juggling of the asides, when she steps out of character to discuss the play. Also outstanding in the large and competent cast are Florence Reed as a Fortune Teller; Montgomery Clift as Henry,

the Cain-marked son of the Antrobuses; and Frances Heflin, their daughter Gladys.

In case you do not know what is going on in between the fanfare of trumpets, the showing of some old lantern slides, the collapsible and flying scenery, and other unaccountable antics included in Eli Kazan's staging of *The Skin of Our Teeth*, the programme makes it easy for you by supplying the following notation:

"*The Skin of Our Teeth* is a comedy about George Antrobus, his wife and two children, and their general utility maid Lily Sabina, all of Excelsior, New Jersey. George Antrobus is John Doe or George Spelvin or you—the average American a grips with a destiny, sometimes sour, sometimes sweet.

"*The Antrobuses* have survived fire, flood, pestilence, the seven-year locusts, the ice age, the black pox and the double feature, a dozen wars and as many depressions. They have run many a gamut, as durable as radiators, and look upon the future with a disarming optimism. Ultimately bewitched, befuddled and becalmed, they are the stuff of which heroes are made—heroes and buffoons. They are true offspring of Adam and Eve, victims of all the ills that flesh is heir to. They have survived a thousand calamities by the skin of their teeth, and Mr. Wilder's play is a tribute to their indestructibility."

This dubious disciple of the drama admired the acting and all that, but failed to see any great merit or originality in Mr. Wilder's play. But the most encouraging aspect of all is that a script as unconventional as this one actually got a production in a sector as sceptical as Broadway—tribute to Mr. Myerberg's undaunted confidence in the play and to the indestructibility of the theatre.

WE were always sorry not to have been in London in 1938 when the Saint Denis production of Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* was being performed so brilliantly at the Queens, by John Gielgud, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Peggy Ashcroft, Carol Goodner, Angela Baddeley and Leonid Kinskey. For now we have in New York a Katharine Cornell presentation of *The Three Sisters*, staged by Guthrie McClintic, with the three petulant Moscow minded Prozorov sisters played by Miss Cornell as Masha; Judith Anderson as Olga; Gertrude Musgrove as Irina; and Ruth Gordon as Natasha, the scheming sister-in-



By our American  
Correspondent

## E. MAWBY GREEN

(Right): Judith Anderson as Olga, Katharine Cornell as Masha and Gertrude Musgrove as Irina in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* at the Barrymore Theatre, New York.

(Below):

L-R: Eugenie Leontovich, Elena Miranovna and Ludmilla Toretzka in *Dark Eyes*, the sparkling comedy at the Belasco Theatre.

(Below right):

Fallulah Bankhead, who gives a brilliant performance in *The Skin of Our Teeth*, the remarkable play by Thornton Wilder which has caused something of a furore on Broadway.



Vandamm Studio.



Vandamm Studio.

aw. In the male roles: Dennis King as Col. Vershinin; Alexander Knox as Baron Tuzenbach; Edmund Gwenn as army doctor Chebutkin; Eric Dressler as the brother; Andrey Prozorov; Tom Powers as Kuligin, Masha's high school teacher husband; and McKay Morris as Capt. Solyony.



Photo by Eileen Darby.

Such a brilliant display of personalities has, of course, been supported by an equally superb Cornell-McClintic production, with settings and costumes by Motley, who performed the same service in London.

In the first act it is a grand and rare experience to see a stage so cluttered with

## Echoes from Broadway

(Continued from page 29)

stars. You just sit and gasp, fascinated by so breathtaking a spectacle, but as the action proceeds and the beads of the male Russian characters become more and more involved, you begin to wish that Chekhov had written a play worthy of all this talent heaped so handsomely upon it. For this *The Three Sisters* is so finely finished a production that it seems to act itself right out of the script. Instead of being emotionally stirred and moved, you are awed by the grandeur of it all, and cannot accept these stars as an integral part of the play, but rather as personalities with too much ability and no chance to show it. And this is why we regretted more than ever not having seen the Saint Denis production at the Queens, for then we would have discovered how this Chekhov drama stood up under the burden of that star-studded company.

### Capacity Business

As can be expected, the opportunity to see Miss Cornell surrounded by so brilliant a cast is not being passed up by any playgoer lucky enough to secure a ticket at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, where the production has been playing to capacity business since opening late in December. It is a highly distinguished theatrical event as well as a major disappointing one. For from so magnificent a cast you expect to see some marvellous acting; instead, you see only flashes of brilliance whenever the parts permit, which is at too infrequent an interval as there are too many dull spots throughout which make the play incredibly boring at times. You come away feeling you have seen some great moments of acting but not a greatly acted play.

**A**FTER fidgeting with the frustrated Prozorov sisters, it is good to go over to the Belasco Theatre and see three real Russian ladies actually let their hair down and give . . . give way to their Russian emotionalisms, in a new comedy *Dark Eyes*, by Elena Miramova, in collaboration with Eugenie Leontovich, presented and staged by Jed Harris.

Having tired of searching for a suitable vehicle to bring them back to the stage, it seems Miss Miramova and Miss Leontovich got together and decided to write their own, and thoroughly completed the job by including a part for another excellent actress, Ludmilla Toretzka.

Let it be said from the beginning *Dark Eyes* is not a great comedy, and without these three excitable and enchanting Russian actresses to put it across, coupled with Mr. Harris' expert gift for staging, we doubt if *Dark Eyes* would have been the twinkling success it is. Apparently, Miss Miramova and Miss Leontovich know a funny Russian situation when they see one, and know how

much fun they can extract from it. In any case they definitely know their Russians; their tempestuous nature and quick shifts of temperament, from high laughter to low tears and back again, over and over again, all done with true respect and restraint.

### The Story

*Dark Eyes* has just a fragment of a story. A Russian friend of theirs takes them to the Long Island home of his American fiancée, whose father is a Washington politician, home for the week-end and seeking peace from the wars of the week. He gets nothing of the kind, of course, but instead promises to furnish the money to back a play these three deserving Russian ladies have written. All would have been well if they had let well alone, but Miss Leontovich is smitten by the horrible thought that men don't back plays for women without an ulterior sex motive lurking at the back of their mind. Whereupon Miss Miramova, who is by this time in love with their backer, surprises him by rejecting his offer on both counts. It takes an attempt at suicide by Leontovich and Miramova before backing and the backer are finally restored to former footing.

When *Dark Eyes* has finished sparkling in America, it would be an excellent idea if the authors and Miss Ludmilla Toretzka could be persuaded to continue their riotous fun-making over in London, for it is delightful and delirious entertainment.

### For Future Review

Reserved for review later are: Max Gordon's production of *The Doughgirls*, new comedy success by Joseph Fields, co-author of two other Broadway hits, *My Sister Eileen* and *Junior Miss*; and Michael Todd's smash musical *Something for the Boys*, book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, who also did *Let's Face It*, music by Cole Porter, and starring Ethel Merman.

### Casualties

On the casualty list are: *Flare Path*, by Terence Rattigan, which Gilbert Miller presented, with Alec Guinness and Helena Pickard; *Yankee Point*, by Gladys Hurlbut, which brought Edna Best back to the New York stage; Herman Shumlin's production of *The Great Big Doorstep*, a new comedy by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, from the novel of E. P. O'Donnell, with Dorothy Gish and Louis Calhern, and which deserved to run longer. Lee Shubert's production of *Proof Thro' the Night*, tried out in Hollywood successfully as *Cry Havoc* by Allan R. Kenward, with an all female cast; *The Willow and I*, by John Patrick with Martha Scott, Barbara O'Neil and Gregory Peck, which we also think should have lasted longer; and *Nine Girls*, a melo drama by Wilfrid H. Pettitt, with nine young ladies in the cast, which early demise was in order.



# In the Limelight

(Right):

MARY HAYLEY BELL

charming portrait of the author of *Women in Shadow*, the successful war play at the Vaudeville Theatre. Mary Hayley Bell is the wife of John Mills who stars in the play with such outstanding success.

*Portrait by 20th Century Studio.*



(Below):

PAMELA BROWN

characteristic study of Pamela Brown in the title role of *Claudia*, the play about a girl-wife who nearly refuses to grow up, which is still packing the St. Martin's.



*Fred Daniels.*



*Judith Craig.*

ANNE ZIEGLER and WEBSTER BOOTH are starring in *The Vagabond King*, opening at the Winter Garden Theatre in Easter week.



# AMATEUR STAGE

## Notes and Topics

**T**HE South is speaking up. Two issues ago the question was asked as to what Little Theatres were operating to compare with those in the North, and here are two typical replies. Miss Evelyn A. Bannister, of the Brighton Little Theatre Company, writes:—

"The history of this company dates back to the days of 1936-1939, when, as The Brighton & Hove Amateur Repertory Company, we presented eight plays a year of the calibre of *Noah*, *Journey's End*, *Street Scene* and *Madchen in Uniform*. In those days our 'theatre' was a very large hall in Hove and we operated under normal conditions. When war broke out, however, the hall was requisitioned by the military authorities and we found ourselves homeless. We kept together, however, and formed a number of drama classes and rehearsal groups, always hoping that sooner or later a new theatre would turn up. In the summer of 1940 we took over the lease of an art studio in the centre of Brighton, and by combined effort and enthusiasm, managed to convert it into a delightful little theatre with plush, tip-up seats, full lighting (including 'spots' and 'floods')

and a five-foot painting of the head of Mr. G. B. Shaw in the entrance hall!

"Our policy now is to present a play every month throughout the year and among our biggest successes have been *Robert's Wife*, *A Bill of Divorcement*, *The Seagull*, *Arms and the Man*, *Granite*, *Spring Meeting*, *Accent on Youth* and *Candida*. Our current production is *I Have Been Here Before*. The capacity of the theatre is eighty-five and we work on the same principle as the London Little Theatres, that is, invitations are issued to members only, who pay a nominal subscription.

"Naturally, we have suffered considerably in having members of the company taken away by the services and so on, but we manage to muster a regular group of ten (five men and five women) and we have quite a considerable list of ex-members who play for us whenever they are available.

"Finally, we are the only company of amateurs now operating with any degree of regularity in Sussex, and although we have been through some sticky times, financially speaking, I think we can honestly say that we are now getting truly established again, and our conclusions—based on the comparative box office figures for various types of play—are that there will always be audiences for good and sincere plays and that escapism is not the order of the day."

**A**ND here is a letter from Mr. C. W. E. Buckley on the work of Neath Little Theatre:—

"In common with similar organisations, the forces have claimed a number of members of both sexes, but despite these losses, the theatre has continued to function, if on a less extensive scale than in peace-time.

"In pre-war days, a weekly meeting was held at the Neath Little Theatre Headquarters and Club-room (equipped with a complete stage, though perhaps on the small side) at which a one-act play was performed. At the conclusion of the play, the producer took the stage alone, while members offered criticism—constructive or otherwise—on the choice of play, casting, acting, lighting, movements, in fact, on anything connected with the production. The producer then replied to his or her critics.

"Major Productions' (i.e., public performances) were usually three a season, and the producer of a Major Production had to show his or her capabilities by first producing one-act plays at the weekly meetings.

"War conditions have limited meetings to one a fortnight, but every endeavour is made to continue the policy of a one-act play for each meeting. Major Productions

(Continued opposite)



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have also been curtailed to one a season since 1939-40, but the quality of production has not waned. The production of November, 1942, was such a success—a record in fact—that it is hoped to do another.

“Since its formation, the Neath Little Theatre has become firmly established in the district, and has gained public confidence and support by reason of its high standard of productions. The decision to launch a further production this season was the direct result of public support and request.

“The theatre is also fortunate in being able to work in harmony with the local Borough Council, in whose hall the Major Productions are performed, and have on several occasions presented productions for special efforts sponsored by the Corporation. In February the Neath and District ‘Aid to Russia Civic Week’ included an evening of one-act plays by the ‘N.L.T.’

“Members of the Forces serving in the District have not been forgotten. The fortnightly meetings are open to the Forces, who have much appreciated the gesture. Indeed, several serving men have taken part in Headquarters Productions. Theatre members have also given their services, particularly on Sunday evenings, to entertain members of the Forces in local canteens and clubs.

“It would be invidious to attempt to mention all those who, by their unsparring efforts, have kept the Little Theatre functioning, particularly during a period when it was feared that conditions would force a ‘close-down,’ but the name of the chairman, Mr. W. Clark Jackson, at once springs to mind. Despite his many commitments in other spheres, the Neath Little Theatre has always been in the forefront of his activities, and it is in no small measure that due to his efforts the dark period has passed and the lost ground regained.

“The Neath Little Theatre have a great ambition—to possess their own theatre, and when war came plans were well advanced to achieve this. The enforced deferment was a great disappointment, but it is hoped that it will not be so very long before that ambition is fulfilled.”

## Sadler's Wells Ballet

(Continued from page 21)

brilliant. Her leg in arabesque tends to sag at the knee and this spoils her “line,” but she has a joy in dancing rare in English dancers and which Julia Farron also possesses. Patricia Garnett, too, has this buoyancy, and great speed of technique, but she packs all her exuberance into her first half-dozen spins or *fouettés*, after which they get ragged. When she learns control her technique will be outstanding. Peggy Van Praagh's *fouettés* are more evenly executed, she dances an excellent *Coppelia* and is valuable both as technician and teacher, and Wenda Horsburgh's miming of a varied collection of mothers is outstanding. Experienced dancers such as these and Celia Franca, a classical dancer of style and flight-like elevation, form the backbone of any company. Among small-part dancers Pauline Claydon is noticeable for her very clean straight arabesque and, in *Casse Noisette*, beautiful turn *en attitude*, and Margaret Kelly's Red Riding Hood and Mavis Jackson's White Cat in *The Sleeping Princess* will probably never be bettered. Mavis Jackson also dances the Girl in *Rake's Progress* very well; she is pretty, sincere and her hands and arms are graceful, though as yet she rather lacks variety of expression.

Alexis Rasmine is the problem child of this company; a beautiful soloist with a fine technique and, in *Bluebird*, a *jété en tournant* which for fluency and *ballon* only Helpmann can equal. His Franz in *Coppelia* has great spontaneity and charm and his mime in this is lively and amusing; but in serious parts his face is inexpressive and his partnering, though improving, still shows at times a curious nervousness or lack of concentration—he is, perhaps, insufficiently self-effacing. Until he works at this as he has obviously worked at his variations he will remain an incomplete artist. David Paltenghi, much more limited technically, is a stronger partner and his acting and make-up, especially as the King in *Hamlet*, are excellent. Ray Powell is also becoming noticeable as a character dancer; his Tailor in *Rake* is superb and his Cuckoo in *The Birds*, which a head like a caricature from a set of playing cards and a glum and lumbering pathos, is interesting and original. Most of the male dancers are unavoidably being tried beyond their years and powers; the *Rendezvous Pas de Six* goes from bad to worse and in *The Wanderer* “lifts” one feared for Helpmann's life. But these boys work valiantly and hard in trying circumstances, and in *Coppelia* their dash and sense of beat are surprisingly good. One salutes them, with a special mention for Deryk Mendel, who has danced in *Facade* on two occasions recently when on leave from the R.A.F., and given the Foxtrot a delightful wit and verve.

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